The collocation in French

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1. Introduction

- structure of the dissertation
- corpora: *Frantext*: http://atilf.atilf.fr/frantext.htm

  Tagged Words in Context: http://inferno.philosophie.uni-stuttgart.de/twic/twic.html
- examples

poser une question	'to ask a question'
croiser les doigts	'to keep one's fingers crossed (for sb)'
marquer un but	'to score a goal'
passer une annonce	'to place an ad'
mettre le feu (à qc)	'to set fire (to sth)'

→ V-N collocations

Collocations

- are situated on a scale between free word-combinations and idioms
- are characterized by the limited combinatorial capacity of their constituents
- are transparent and not entirely fixed
- are conventional and recurrent combinations
- differ from one language to another

2. Theories

2.1. English linguistics

- **John Rupert Firth** introduces the term 'collocation' into linguistic theory as part of his theory of meaning (Firth 1957):

  > Meaning by collocation is an abstraction at the syntagmatic level and is not directly concerned with the conceptual or idea approach to the meaning of words. One of the meanings of *night* is its collocability with *dark*, and of *dark*, of course, collocation with *night*.

- **John Sinclair** (Sinclair 1974)**:**
  - makes a distinction between the constituents of a collocation:

- the *node*
- the *collocate*

→ have the same status

- emphasizes the importance of
  - the *collocational span*, the amount of text, within which collocation between items is said to occur

    → optimum span: four places to the left and to the right of the node
- defines *significant collocation:*

  regular collocation between items, such that they co-occur more often than their respective frequencies and the length of text in which they appear would predict.

→ **frequency**, **statistical criteria**

➢ **Anthony Cowie** (Cowie 1983) makes a distinction between

- *restricted collocations* (one constituent has a literal, the other constituent has a figurative meaning)

  to jog somebody's memory
- *open collocations* (both elements keep their literal meaning):

  fill the bucket

→ **semantic criteria**

➢ **Morton Benson**'s definition (Benson 1985, 1997):

By collocation we mean a group of words that occurs repeatedly, i. e. recurs, in a language. These "recurrent phrases" can be divided into *grammatical collocations* and *lexical collocations*.

- *Grammatical collocations* consist of a dominant element and a preposition or a grammatical construction

  fond of, (*we reached*) *an agreement that...*
- *Lexical collocations* do not have a dominant word, their components are "equal"

  to come to an agreement, *affect deeply*, *weak tea*

→ **semantic and functional criteria**

➔ broad understanding of collocation

2.2. French linguistics

➔ a narrower view of collocations predominates

- **Hausmann:**
  - classification of word-combinations according to the features fixed vs. non-fixed

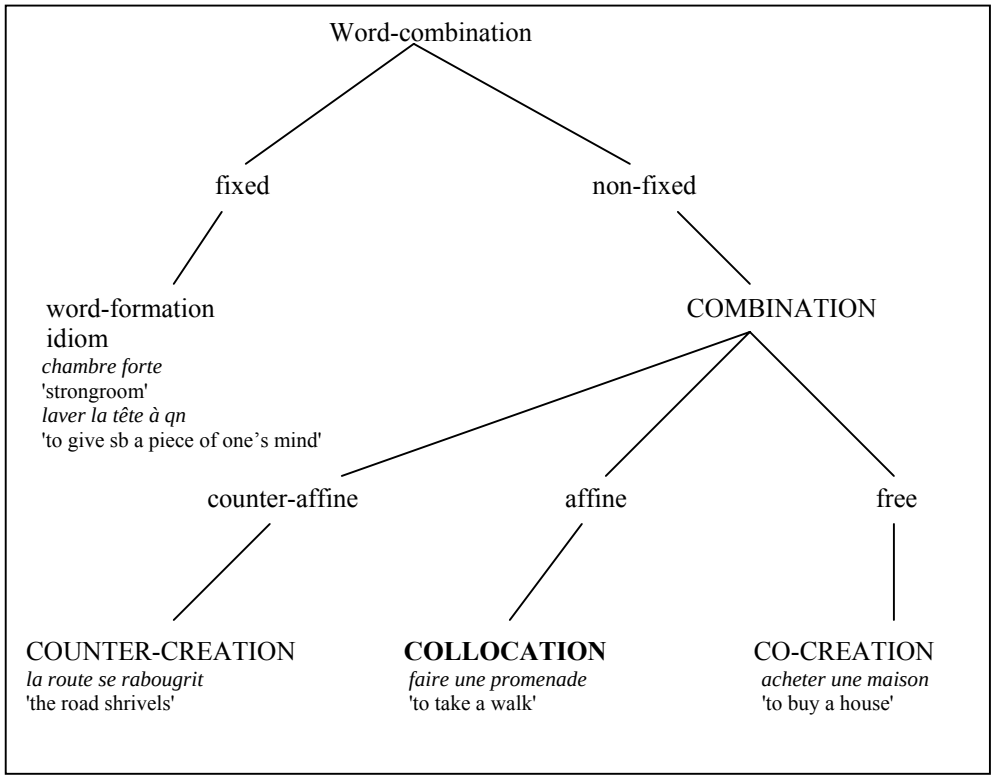

Table 1: Hausmann's classification of word-combinations

- **collocations** (Hausmann 1984):
  binary word-combinations, consist of words with limited combinatorial capacity, are semi-finished products of language, affine combinations of striking habitualness
  - collocation types (Hausmann 1989):

a.)	noun + adjective:	*célibataire endurci*	'confirmed bachelor'
b.)	noun (subject) + verb:	*la colère s'apaise*	'the anger wears off'
c.)	verb + noun (object):	*tenir un journal*	'to keep a diary'
d.)	verb + adverb:	*exiger énergiquement*	'to insist firmly on sth'
e.)	adverb + adjective:	*gravement malade*	'critically ill'
f.)	noun + (prep.) + noun:	*marché du travail*	'labour market'
g.)	verb + prép. + noun (Hausmann 1999):	*rougir de honte*	'to blush'
h.)	adjective + noun (Hausmann 1977):	*(dans un) proche avenir*	'in the near future'

  - the components of a collocation are <u>hierarchically ordered</u> (Hausmann 1984):
    - the *base* is semantically autonomous
    - the *collocate* needs the base in order to get its full meaning
      ravaler sa colère (lit. 'to swallow one's anger')

- **Igor A. Mel'čuk** (Mel'čuk 1995)**:**
  - introduces the so-called *lexical functions* (LFs): describe the combinatorial properties of lexical units (paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations)
  - formally, LFs correspond to mathematical functions → formula: **f** (x) = y
    - x is the *argument* / *keyword*
    - y is the *value*
  - examples

    (1) adjectival LFs

    f is 'intense / very'; 'intensification' → **Magn**

    (1a) **Magn**(*malade*) = *très, gravement*

    Magn(*ill*) = *very, critically*

    (1b) **Magn**(*dormir*) = *profondément, comme une souche ...*

    Magn(*sleep*) = *deeply, like a log ...*

    (2) verbal LFs

    (2a) $\mathbf{Oper_1}$(*remarque*) = *faire* [ART ~]

    lit. $\mathbf{Oper_1}$(remark) = make [ART~]

    (2b) $\mathbf{Func_1}$(*aide*) = *vient* [*de* N]

    lit. $\mathbf{Func_1}$(help) = comes [from N]

    (2c) $\mathbf{Labor_{12}}$(*note*) = *prendre* [N *en* ~]

    lit. $\mathbf{Labor_{12}}$(note) = take [N in ~]

    → used to describe support verb constructions

    → differ above all in the syntactic role of the keyword:

    the keyword of $\mathbf{Oper_i}$ is its direct object (*faire une remarque*)

    the keyword of $\mathbf{Func_i}$ is its grammatical subject (*l'aide vient de qn*)

    the keyword of $\mathbf{Labor_{ij}}$ is its indirect object (*prendre qc en note*)

    → *Simple Standard LFs*

    (3) *Complex LF*

    $\mathbf{IncepOper_1}$(*dispute*) = *entamer*

    $\mathbf{IncepOper_1}$(*argument*) = *start*

➔ systematic description of all the collocations

3. Problems

- there is no generally accepted definition
- there is no classification and typology which is considered to be correct & complete
- collocations do not seem to have a fixed place in linguistic study
- there are no general criteria of classification

←→ collocations represent a problem in text production for the non-native speaker

→ important to register them in dictionaries (under the base)

4. Methods

- **Statistical criteria** (http://www.collocations.de):
  - statistical algorithms for the extraction of collocations from machine-readable texts identify lexical units co-occuring with a higher frequency than the expected
    → potential collocations
  - rely on statistical *association measures* = "mathematical formulae that interpret the cooccurence frequency data"

Common measures are:

- **t-score** algorithm: measures the confidence with which we can claim that there is some association
  Problem (Clear 1993): t-score highlights collocations with high frequency items such as grammatical words
- **MI score** (mutual information score): expresses the extent to which observed frequency of co-occurrence differs from expected
  Problem (Clear 1993): untypical and peculiar collocates are identified

→ Result: lists of potential collocates

- **Semantic criteria:**
  - Mel'čuk's theory: the system of **LFs**
  - analysis of a certain semantic class of
    - **bases** (nouns)

    e.g. Mel'čuk and Wanner (Mel'čuk and Wanner 1996) analysed the semantic field of emotion lexemes in German:
    Oper$_1$(*Angst*) = *haben* 'to be afraid'
    IncepOper$_1$(*Wut*) = *geraten* lit. 'to get into rage' ...

- **collocates** (verbs)

  verbs of motion, possession, duration, state, change of state ...

- **Syntactic criteria:**
  - Mel'čuk's theory: the verbal LFs **Oper$_i$**, **Func$_i$**, **Labor$_{ij}$** (which refer to support verbs) and **Real$_i$**, **Fact$_i$**, **Labreal$_{ij}$** (which refer to fulfilment verbs) allow an identification of the grammatical function of the keyword

    Real$_1$(*problème*) = *résoudre* [ART ~] → the keyword is the direct object

5. Diachronic aspect

- virtually no studies have analysed the phenomenon of collocations from a diachronic point of view
- hypothesis: development of idioms from collocations

  Cowie (Cowie 1983):

  > Historically, pure idioms form the end-point of a process by which word-combinations first establish themselves through constant re-use, then undergo figurative extension and finally petrify or congeal.

- development of collocations: changes in use, semantics, selectional restrictions, processes of lexicalization

6. Example

Verb-Noun collocations of the base *conseil* 'advice'

Verbal collocates of *conseil* Old & Middle French* (Corpus results)	Examples Old & Middle French* from *Frantext*	Verbal collocates of *conseil* Modern French* (Corpus results)	Examples Modern French* from *Frantext*
demander requerir, querre 'to ask'	li archevesques de Cantorbie lor dist (…) que lor demande ne requeroit pas si brief consel. (Froissart, *Chroniques*, 1395)	demander 'to ask'	Il décida alors de demander conseil au Professeur Shaw. (Perec G., *La vie mode d'emploi : Romans*, 1978)
doner 'to give'	Celes li acontent lor estre, que il estoit sainz hom et prestre, et il lor done bon conseil: (*Le roman de renart*, 1190)	donner 'to give'	Voulez-vous que je vous donne un conseil d'ami ? (Dumas A., *Le comte de Monte-Cristo*, 1846)
prendre 'to ask'	"Sire, fait il, il nos estuet bien conseil prendre et demender, qu'on ne porroit pas amander ainsint nostre chose ne croistre. (*Le roman de renart*, 1190)	prendre 'to ask'	...est-ce que je prends conseil de Mr Lerminier ? (Sand G., *Correspondance*, 1841)
		écouter 'to listen'	On n' écouta point ses conseils. (Chateaubriand F. de, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, 1848)
escuter 'to listen'	dehors la chambre vait ester car lur conseil volt escuter (Thomas, *Tristan*, 1172)	croire 'to believe'	Je crois le conseil du grand homme bon. (Flaubert G., *Correspondance*, 1853)
croire 'to believe'	car, naturellement, il estoit enclin à ne vouloir croire le conseil des medecins. (FT, Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1489)	chercher 'to search'	...il chercha conseil dans les yeux de Sabine ; (Rolland R., *L'adolescent*, 1905)
		suivre 'to take, to follow'	Il suivit le conseil de sa tante, et confia le soin de rédiger son contrat à Me Mathias. (Balzac H. de, *Le contrat de mariage*, 1842)
trover 'to find'	et prie Nostre Seignor qu'il li envoit tel conseil qu'il puisse trouver pitié qu'il i puisse trover conseil et misericorde, car il se sent tant vers lui meffez et corpables (*La queste del Saint Graal*, 1220)	recevoir 'to get'	...et l' on reçoit de précieux conseils qui collent aux dents comme des caramels mous. (Sartre J.-P., *La nausée*, 1938)
		entendre 'to hear'	Mais, en cela comme en tout, il n'entendait pas conseil. (Duhamel G., *Vue de la terre promise*, 1934)
dire 'to tell'	Un bon conseil te dirai ja, meillor que je ne fis pieça: Bruns li ors venra ci demain, Rognel vora avoir a plain; (*Le roman de renart*, 1190)	porter 'to bring'	Et pas plus qu' elle, en général, il ne porte conseil. (Breton A., *Les manifestes du surréalisme*, 1942)
mettre 'to put'	mes ge m'esmai moult que ge ne puisse de ceste tour issir a ma volenté, car ele est si avironee de nos anemis de toutes pars que je n'i sai conseil metre. (*La mort Artu*, 1230)	solliciter 'to ask'	Peut-être par habitude professionnelle, peut-être en vertu du calme qu'acquiert tout homme important dont on sollicite le conseil et qui,... (Proust M., *La recherche 4*, 1914)
faire 'to make'	mun message a li portast acun bon conseil me feïst des que ma grant besuine oïst (Thomas, *Tristan*, 1172)	négliger 'not to follow, to neglect'	Du depuis je me suis défié de cette maxime, et ai cru que nous ne pouvions trop faire pour nous sauver, ni négliger les conseils que Dieu nous donnoit pour cela :... (Sainte-Beuve Ch., *Port-Royal*, 1842)
avoir 'to have'	Biaus dous amis Eracle, n'orrai autre consel par vous ? (Gautier d'Arras, *Eracle*, 1180)	prodiguer 'to give'	...et elle lui prodiguait les plus sages conseils. (Zola E., *Pot-Bouille*, 1882)
		accepter 'to accept'	Il faut dire que son goût n' était pas très sûr et qu' elle n'acceptait aucun conseil ; (Beauvoir S. de, *Les Mandarins*, 1954)
geïr 'to admit'	Ma bele amie nel tornez pas a vilanie un conseil que vos voil geïr si vos pri molt del covrir que nuls nel sace avant de nos unques nel dis fors ore a vos (Thomas, *Tristan*, 1172)	etc.	

Table 2: Verbal collocations of *conseil*

*Old French: 9th century – middle of the 14th century
Middle French: middle of the 14th century – end of the 15th century
Modern French: since 15th / 16th century

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